UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General begins official visit to Denmark; discusses upcoming World Summit for Social Development with Danish Prime Minister.

+ Secretary-General warns of destructive war in Croatia if UNPROFOR withdraws; says Croatian Government should reconsider decision not to accept renewal of Force's mandate.

+ Bosnian Government forces launch assault west of Bihac, prompting Serb artillery attack on town; UNPROFOR protests violation of cessation of hostilities agreement and shelling of civilians.

+ Special Representative Gbeho calls on United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to pull staff out of Somalia when UNOSOM II withdraws to avoid kidnappings and attacks.

+ UNHCR begins humanitarian airlift for victims of Chechnya conflict; puts total of refugees and displaced persons at more than 400,000.

+ Preparatory Committee for World Summit for Social Development begins two-week session; to consider international declaration and programme of action for poverty elimination, job creation and social integration.

+ Workshop on reinforcing role of non-governmental organizations in African development begins at Headquarters.

+ IAEA Director-General welcomes Algeria's accession to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today began his first official visit to Denmark, and met with the country's Prime Minister. They discussed the World Summit for Social Development and the work of the United Nations in the post-cold war era. The Summit, which will be held in Copenhagen in March, will be attended by 93 heads of State or Government. The Secretary-General noted that Denmark was the largest contributor to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and that it had 1,361 troops participating in five different peace-keeping operations.

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The Secretary-General later visited the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/UNDP supply centre at Copenhagen free port, and met with United Nations staff at the World Health Organization (WHO) regional headquarters for Europe. Tomorrow, he will visit the Bella Centre -- the venue for the Social Summit -- and will meet with representatives of non-governmental organizations active in the field of social development. He will later leave Denmark to begin a three-day visit to Germany.

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Withdrawal of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) from Croatia would likely lead to the resumption of war there, according to the Secretary-General. In a report to the Security Council dated 14 January, he expressed hope that the Croatian Government would reconsider its decision not to accept a further renewal of the Force's mandate beyond 31 March. He warned that the next war in Croatia would be more destructive than the one which raged in 1991-1992, in view of the accumulation of weapons there.

The fundamental solution to the problem in Croatia could only be sought through political dialogue, the Secretary-General stressed. The parties themselves bore the primary responsibility for achieving such a solution, and must take the necessary steps towards reconciliation. The successful implementation of the Cease-fire Agreement of March 1994 and the conclusion of the Economic Agreement last month had enhanced the possibilities of progress. "UNPROFOR's task has been to keep the peace and thus facilitate the process of reconciliation", he said. "In other words, it is a means to an end, not an end in itself."

The Secretary-General went on to say that if the Croatian Government did not reconsider its position, he would undertake a detailed study of the practical consequences and financial implications of UNPROFOR's withdrawal. He would also examine whether the Force's headquarters and logistic base should be maintained in the capital of a country where there was no longer a mandate or a troop presence. He added that he would consult closely with members of the Security Council on the options available.

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Bosnian Government forces launched an attack in the western part of the Bihac pocket over the weekend, capturing and holding some territory, according to a United Nations spokesman. In response, Serb forces shelled Bihac on Saturday, killing five civilians, and fired mortars into the town on Sunday, killing another two. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFR) protested to the Government side for launching the attack in violation of the current cessation of hostilities agreement, and to the Serb side for shelling civilians.

The spokesman said Croatian Serb forces had allowed some United Nations convoys to enter the Bihac pocket, bypassing the town of Velika Kladusa. Meanwhile in Sarajevo, hopes that the airport routes would be reopened over the weekend were not fulfilled. However, technical discussions were underway

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between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb representatives regarding who could use the routes when restrictions on movement were lifted.

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Special Representative Victor Gbeho has called on all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to pull their international staff out of Somalia when the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) withdraws, in order to avoid kidnappings and attacks. A United Nations spokesman said Mr. Gbeho expected continued clashes after the Operation completed its withdrawal next month, but not a full-scale resumption of civil war.

The spokesman noted that UNOSOM II had moved its headquarters from the old United States Embassy compound to Mogadishu airport over the weekend. Meanwhile, there was some fighting among Somali factions, but reports of hostage taking were exaggerated, he added.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has begun an airlift of 75 metric tons of humanitarian supplies for thousands of people displaced by the fighting in Chechnya. A UNHCR-chartered plane carried 42 tons of supplies to North Ossetia from Amsterdam yesterday, and then flew on to Turkey to pick up another cargo for delivery on Tuesday.

Nine UNHCR staff and a representative of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs arrived in the region last week to assess the needs of the estimated 150,000 people who have fled Chechnya. There are an estimated 260,000 displaced persons in the Republic itself. The UNHCR is working closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the north Caucasus, and is cooperating with the Russian Federal Migration Service and the Russian relief agency EMERCOM.

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The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development today began a two-week session at Headquarters. The Committee will consider an international declaration and programme of action to guide efforts to eliminate poverty, create jobs and promote social development and integration. The drafts will be submitted for adoption to the Summit, which will be held in Copenhagen in March.

The draft declaration, which was prepared by the Committee Chairman, outlines nine commitments to be made by the international community to ensure social progress. Governments would commit to enhancing social development so that all people might have the rights, resources and responsibilities to lead satisfying lives and to contribute to their families and communities. Social development would be recognized as "central to the needs and aspirations of people throughout the world and to the responsibilities of governments and all sectors of civil society".

The draft programme of action, which was submitted by the Secretariat, outlines measures to implement the declaration's principles. It recommends actions to create an environment favourable to social development, eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment and foster social integration. The programme promotes an "integrated approach" combining many different actions and international strategies for social development.

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Improving collaboration between non-governmental organizations, African governments and the United Nations is the main focus of a workshop which began today at Headquarters. The two-day workshop is also discussing legal frameworks for strengthened cooperation, and the feasibility of convening an international conference on non-governmental organizations and African development.

Participants in the workshop include senior representatives of African and non-African countries, non-governmental organizations, senior United Nations officials, and members of the Panel of High-Level Personalities on African Development. The Panel was appointed by the Secretary-General in 1992 to advise him on African development issues in general, and on implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s in particular. The workshop was organized by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries -- which acts as the secretariat for the Panel -- in the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

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Algeria has become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), by depositing its instrument of accession in Washington, London and Moscow, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). IAEA Director-General Hans Blix welcomed Algeria's accession, saying it would add impetus to efforts to declare the whole of Africa a nuclear weapon-free zone. The country's accession brings the current total of States parties to the NPT to 168.

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